

Three schools in final round

SPORTS REPORTER

Kanial Khata High School won a thrilling tie-breaker against Islami Boys High School to clinch the zonal title in the banglalink tiger trophy National Schools Football tournament at the Nilphamari Stadium yesterday.

At the Pabna Stadium, Yunus Ali High School crushed Maulanabad Secondary School of Jhenidah by 5-0 margin in the zonal final. Alim scored twice for the winners from Pabna.

Faridpur High School won emphatically against Adfadanga AZ Pilot High School by 4-0.

Sajib, Salehin, Zakir and Raj scored one each for Faridpur.

The Comilla zone final will now take place today after heavy rain prevented play yesterday at the Comilla Stadium.

Jessore go in front

SPORTS REPORTER

Jessore lead the three-team final round of the NCC Bank inter-district volleyball tournament after they defeated Sathkira by 3-2 sets at the Kushtia Stadium yesterday.

Jessore, Sathkira and hosts Kushtia will take part in two more matches today to determine the champions after all three teams were winners in the first round.

County stint for Sourav?

AFP, New Delhi

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly is in talks with English county Northamptonshire about playing for them for five weeks from June, it was reported on Friday.

"There is a possibility of me playing for Northamptonshire this season, but nothing has been finalised," Ganguly was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India (PTI).

Northants official Mark Tack confirmed the county was seeking the left-handed batsman as a replacement for Chris Rogers who has been called up for duty with the Australia A team.

"We are looking for a replacement for Rogers. A final decision will be made in a week's time," Tack told PTI.

If a contract is finalised, Ganguly will play county cricket for five weeks from the end of June, Tack said.

Ganguly, who played for Glamorgan last season, is unlikely to make up his mind before May 24 when the Indian Test squad will be named for the West Indies series.

Ganguly is not in the one-day team that left for the Caribbean early Friday for a series of five internationals that precede the four Test matches against the West Indies.

"Sourav will wait to see if he is picked for the Test matches, otherwise he will play in England," a source close to the cricketer told AFP.

Moody way of Sanath return

AFP, London

Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody gave a cautious welcome to the prospect of veteran opener Sanath Jayasuriya coming out of Test retirement to join the squad ahead of this month's second Test against England.

"I understand he's coming here in the next few days," said Moody after seeing England score 318 for three on the first day of the first Test at Lord's.

"But my focus right now is on the squad of players I've got here.

"Sanath's obviously had some deep thought about his decision to retire. If he's fit and back in form, it can't be a bad thing can it?" Moody said of the 36-year-old former captain.

"He's a devastating player, he has been for Sri Lanka for many, many years. He's obviously still a very key component to our one-day campaign and he was due here anyway in two or three weeks' time for the one-dayers.

"Him coming early, the positive is that he's going to get used to English conditions a little bit earlier for the one-day series if not before then."

Jayasuriya has scored 6,613 runs in 102 Tests with 14 centuries. He is also the fourth batsman to have scored 10,000 runs in one-day internationals after India's Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly, and Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq.

Ferenc Puskas

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Now back in Hungary, Puskas has suffered health problems in recent years but in a tribute worthy of his career, the People's Stadium in Budapest was named in his honour to mark his 75th birthday in 2002.

Windies eye clean sweep

Cricket

AFP, Port of Spain

West Indies are eyeing a clean sweep, when they contest the last two one-day internationals in their seven-match series against Zimbabwe on Saturday and Sunday at Queen's Park Oval.

West Indies hold an unbeatable 4-0 lead in the seven-match series, after enjoying back-to-back victories by five wickets and 98 runs in the first two matches at St. John's, an 82-run win last Sunday at Georgetown, and a 10-wicket triumph on Wednesday at Gros Islet.

"We do not need to take a step backwards now, after taking two forward, so we are looking for more victories and more convincing victories in the last two ODIs," remarked West Indies captain Brian Lara.

"Hopefully, these matches will be

the start of something to come. We have a very important series, starting next Thursday against India, and the next 200 overs of ODIs against Zimbabwe, we must execute pretty well."

Asked if the Zimbabweans have been adequate preparation for the series against the Indians starting next week, Lara asserted that there is no replacement for match practice.

"I think most importantly we are all professionals and whatever we can get out of this series is good preparation for us," he said.

"I think confidence is most important for any West Indies team during this point in time.

"Our backs have been against the wall lately, and we have been losing a lot of matches both in Tests and ODI, so whoever we can play against and win to build up a winning sequence is important for us."

Terrence Duffin, the Zimbabwe captain, continued to emphasise

that his side was on a learning curve and they have been learning some hard lessons.

"We just have to keep working and keep trying to do the basics and, hopefully, a win will come," he said.

Zimbabwe are set to contest a triangular ODI series with 2007 ICC World Cup qualifiers Bermuda and Canada in Trinidad between May 16 and 20, and Duffin feels the series against West Indies will toughen his side up.

"We will go into the triangular competition with Bermuda and Canada with the experience we have gained from this series," he said.

"This series will be a big help for us and, hopefully, we can prove something there."

West Indies have announced that wicketkeeper-batsman Carlton Baugh Jr., and left-arm medium-fast bowler Ian Bradshaw have been brought into the squad for the two ODIs.

Patterson passes away

AFP, Washington

Floyd Patterson, the first world heavyweight champion to lose the crown and then reclaim it, died here on Thursday at his home at age 71.

The American first won the heavyweight throne in 1956 at age 21, becoming at the time the youngest heavyweight champion.

He lost the title to Sweden's Ingemar Johansson in 1959 but reclaimed the crown the following year.

He finished his career with a record of 55-8 with one draw and 40 knockouts.

"Floyd Patterson was an icon, a true gentleman and a great representative of the sport of boxing," International Boxing Hall of Fame executive director Edward Brophy said.

"He will be missed." Patterson was the middleweight champion at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, winning the gold medal bout with a first-round knockout, the first Olympic champion in the weight class to win by knockout.

Seven months after undefeated heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano retired in April of 1956, Patterson took boxing's most prized title with a fifth-round knockout of Archie Moore in Chicago.

Patterson made four successful defenses of the heavyweight crown before being stopped by Johansson at Yankee Stadium in New York on June 26, 1959.

Ghana ring

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Eindhoven, Netherlands). Issah Ahmed (Randers, Denmark), Sheila Illiasu (Asante Kotoko), Samuel Osei Kuffour (AS Roma, Italy), John Mensah (Stade Rennes, France), Habib Mohammed (King Faisal Babes, Ghana), John Paintsil (Hapoel Tel Aviv, Israel), Emmanuel Pappoe (Hapoel Kfar Saba, Israel), Daniel Quaye (Hears of Oak), Hans Sarpei (VfL Wolfsburg, Germany)

Midfielders: Otto Addo (FSV Mainz, Germany), Stephen Appiah (Fenerbahce, Turkey), Derek Boateng (AIK Stockholm, Sweden), Haminu Dramani (Red Star Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro), Michael Essien (Chelsea, England), Sulley Ali Muntari (Udinese, Italy)

Strikers: Matthew Amoah (Borussia Dortmund, Germany), Asamoah Gyan (Modena, Italy), Razak Pimpong (FC Copenhagen, Denmark), Alex Tachie-Mensah (St. Gallen, Switzerland)

Can Henry rise

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Trézeguet both have 31 goals. Henry has taken 76 matches to reach that total, Trézeguet only 61. But Henry has set up many more for his French teammates, mirroring his two-faceted ability to both score and create for Arsenal.

"We are lucky to have two world-class strikers," Domenech said. "Traditionally, strikers approach their peak at 28 or 29, so hopefully this will be the case."

When France struggled in its World Cup qualifying group, Henry scored one of the most important goals of his career to secure a crucial 1-0 win at Ireland.

Picking up a loose ball some 25 yards from the net, he took one step forward and curled the ball over the shoulder of Ireland goalkeeper Shay Given, who was beaten diving in a full stretch.

"The whole team felt a weight lift off its shoulders," Henry said after the Ireland win.

But that goal is not in Henry's Top 10, which features stunning solo scores against Real Madrid and Liverpool, and his famed spin, flick and looping shot against Manchester United that left goalkeeper Fabien Barthez grasping thin air.

But in terms of sheer importance it makes the it alongside his seminal tying goal against Portugal at the 2000 European Championship, and his successful penalty shootout kick against Italy in the quarterfinals of the 1998 World Cup.

Both years, France went on to win the competition. Henry perhaps needed that goal against Ireland as much as France did.

Criticized for a lack of offence, Henry heard claims he had not produced a strong performance for Les Bleus since November 2004, when France won 3-0 in Germany. That night, even German fans applauded a moment of astonishing skill when he gathered a high ball at midfield, and with Christian Worns all over him, flicked the ball over Worns' head, spun round and sped toward the net before setting up Trézeguet.

French fans will be hoping for more of the same next month. A fringe player in 1998, a peripheral performer in 2002, Henry wants the 2006 tournament to be his stamp as a world beater -- joining Zidane as a French sporting legend.

"Players of that standard are always asking themselves questions," former France coach Jacques Santini said. "This is because they want to be excellent all the time."



England batsman Kevin Pietersen celebrates his century against Sri Lanka on the second day of the first Test at Lord's on Friday.

Pietersen at his best

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England, who won the toss in the line defensively, he was lbw to Vaas. In all Pietersen faced 205 balls with two sixes and 19 four in exactly five hours at the crease having been 'caught' off a Farveez Maharoof no-ball on Thursday.

Five balls later 502 for five became 502 for six when Collingwood was bowled by a Muralitharan delivery that kept low.

Flintoff was fortunate on 11 when he thumped a drive back at Vaas only for the bowler to put down the difficult one-handed chance above his head.

As England pressed for quick runs, Flintoff lofted his former Lancashire teammate Muralitharan for six before repeating the dose and then declaring.

England, who won the toss in the first of a three-match series, started Friday on 318 for three after opener Marcus Trescothick (106) had made a century on his return to Test cricket Thursday and Alastair Cook, in his first Test in England, 89.

But nightwatchman Matthew Hoggard soon fell for seven, bowled by a Vaas yorker.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard after England declared their first innings on the second day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at Lord's on Friday:

ENGLAND: First innings (overnight 318-3) Trescothick c Jayawardene b Muralidaran 106 Strauss c Jayawardene b Muralidaran 48 Cook c Sangakkara b Maharoof 89

WI, India to play in USA

AFP, Port of Spain

West Indies and India will contest between three to five one-day internationals in the United States and Canada later this year, the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) has announced.

The matches form part of a bilateral agreement reached at the recent International Cricket Council (ICC) board meeting in Dubai on ways in which West Indies and India would cooperate in the future.

"The major breakthrough from this agreement will be the development and expansion of cricket in North America through the hosting of matches and, in particular, joint ventures to be pursued such as the opening of the multi-complex stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, a news release from the WICB disclosed.

The ODIs targeted for August-September this year will be a major boost for the game in North America, particularly the United States which has gone through its share of administrative difficulties and lost out on a chance to host matches in Fort Lauderdale at the 2007 ICC World Cup being hosted by the West Indies.

Table with 5 columns: Player, Runs, Wickets, etc. Includes names like Pietersen lbw b Vaas, Hoggard b Vaas, Collingwood b Muralidaran, etc.

Rooney return

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must travel to Germany with the squad on June 5. The tournament starts four days later.

The optimistic forecasts from Old Trafford may help to explain why Eriksson, who has selected only four forwards, did not pick more cover in attack when he named his 23-man World Cup squad on Monday. While acknowledging that Rooney must still be regarded as fragile, the head coach is working on the basis that he will have a full complement of players by the knockout rounds.

England kick off against Paraguay on June 10 and Rooney has been told to abandon any idea of playing in Frankfurt. The next match, against Trinidad & Tobago in Nuremberg, comes five days later, with Sweden to follow more than seven weeks after the striker felt an agonising pain at Stamford Bridge when he went down under a challenge from Paulo Ferreira, the Chelsea defender.

'Listen to 'em'

Cricket

PTI, Kingston

Do not gag them but heed the complaints of the likes of Virender Sehwag and Shahid Afridi about fears of player burnout, some leading voices in the world of cricket said on Thursday.

Former Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga, Pakistan's coach Bob Woolmer and ex-England skipper Graham Gooch expressed the view that honest opinions of players should be listened to.

But in an interesting take on the warning given by the Board of Control for Cricket in India to vice-captain Sehwag for talking about too much cricket, former West Indian fast bowling great Michael

Holding suggested that the relationship between the Board and the Indian players was that of an employer and an employee.

Ranatunga stated that excessive cricket could make players mentally stale and better pay cheque alone was not the answer for it.

"I am not sure if excessive cricket or travelling is the reason for complaint but if true, it could cause mental staleness among cricketers. Extra money alone isn't the answer," Gooch, the highest run getter in England's history, said it was time the administrators started to treat players like grown up individuals rather than pull them by the ear everytime around.

"Players are grown up, why shouldn't they be allowed to express an honest opinion," Gooch remarked.

50-0 for Nadal

Tennis

AFP, Rome

Rafael Nadal clinched his 50th successive victory on clay here on Thursday with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Britain's Tim Henman to reach the Rome Masters quarter-finals as he closed in on Guillermo Vilas's all-time record on the surface.

If Nadal successfully defends his title here on Sunday, he will equal the record set by Argentine Vilas who managed 53 straight wins on clay in 1977.

But if the French Open champion is to reach that landmark, it is likely he will have to overcome world number one Roger Federer after the Swiss top seed reached the quarterfinals with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Radek Stepanek.

The world number one, who has reached the final of the last five Masters Series events in which he has played and won four of them, took just 56 minutes to beat the Czech 14th seed.

Nadal eased past the veteran Henman to make the last eight.

He broke to lead 3-1 in the first set and again in the eighth game of the one-sided encounter.

Any hope Henman had of staging a

comeback was dashed in the fourth game of the second set when Nadal unleashed two sweet passing shots, which left the Briton struggling.

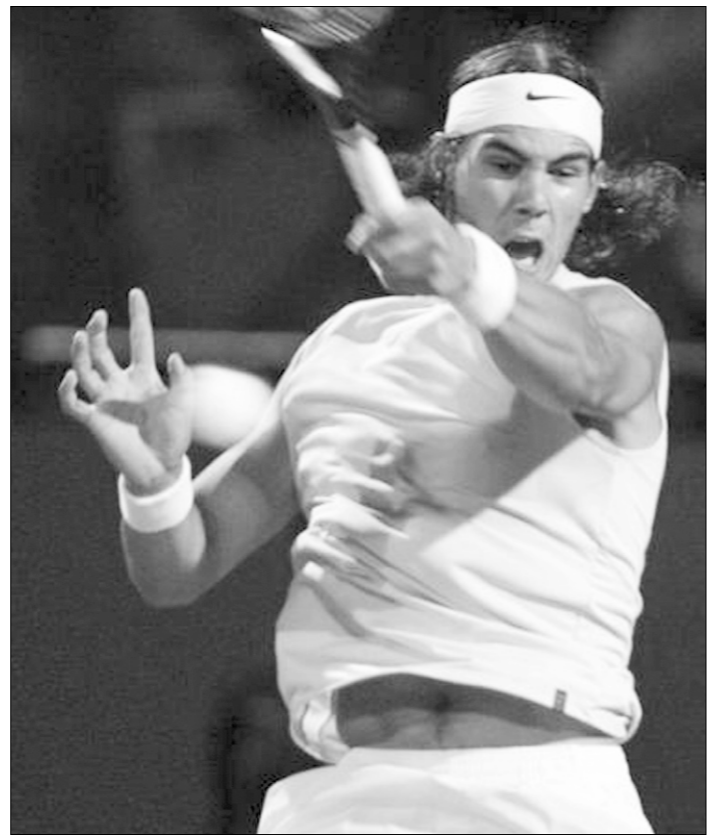
The Spaniard wrapped up the third round clash with a smash at the net to set up a last eight match-up against big-hitting number ten seed Fernando Gonzalez of Chile who put out Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-4.

"Fifty? That's a lot of wins but the most important thing is to be in the quarter-finals," said the teenager.

"I played a serious match and I got a quick break in both sets and that was the crucial thing.

"Now I play Gonzalez and that will be difficult. I have lost my two matches against him. They were a long time ago -- in 2003 and 2004 -- but I don't forget easily."

Federer, who lost to Nadal in Monte Carlo last month, had to fight back from 40-0 down when 5-4 ahead in the second set before clinching victory against the dogged Stepanek.



Spaniard Rafael Nadal plays a forehand against Tim Henman of Great Britain (not in picture) in the third round match of the Rome Masters at Rome on Thursday.

Strauss scare for England

CRICINFO, undated

More injury concerns have hit England's side. This time it's the turn of Andrew Strauss who has gone to hospital to have an X-ray on his ankle.

Strauss, who hit 48 on the first day, went over on his ankle in practice Friday morning and the X-ray has been advised as a precaution.

His condition will be reassessed on Saturday.

The stadium name game

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prohibit the appearance of the logos and advertising of non-sponsors within a kilometer of the 12 stadiums.

"In the leases, it has been clearly determined that the rented sites must be clean of advertising when they are handed over," Gregor Lentze, managing director of FIFA Marketing and TV Germany, told Horizont Sport Business.

FIFA protects its properties, copyrighting and trademarking multiple variations of the World Cup logos and marks. Since the beginning of the year, FIFA has filed hundreds of copyright violation requests with German courts.

HSV stadium manager Kurt Kraegel said the club tried to simply hide the 20-foot-high letters that overlook the entrance, but that plan was nixed.

Instead, FIFA asked they be removed completely, which the club did last week at a cost of \$250,000 --

a fee the club must pay.

Hamburg's stadium "AOL Arena" seen at night before the German first division soccer match between Hamburger SV and MSV Duisburg at the AOL Arena in Hamburg, northern Germany, in this Nov. 20, 2005 photo.

Ask anyone in this northern German city how to get to the AOL Arena and he'll gladly point the way. But the stadium, which has carried the name of the online provider since 2004, won't go by that name during the World Cup. The reason is simple. FIFA, which oversees the quadrennial competition, holds a strict line on corporate sponsorships and advertising deals, letting only those who pay play.

"We didn't realize it would be so cost-intensive," Kraegel said. Come the end of the World Cup, the letters will go back up because AOL's contract runs through July 2007.

In Munich, workers removed the giant letters at a cost of \$190,000 to

meet the FIFA regulations. During the tournament, the Allianz letters will be on the roof of a museum that is hosting an exhibit by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, the Swiss architects who designed the arena.

Other stadiums losing their names include Hanover's AWD Arena, Cologne's RheinEnergie Stadium and Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park. Berlin's Olympiastadion will stay unchanged, as will Nuremberg's Frankenstadion and Kaiserslautern's Fritz Walter Stadion.

Beate Schlosser, a spokeswoman for the Frankfurt-based Commerzbank, said the company was not distressed by the loss of its corporate name on the stadium in Frankfurt, if only for a month.

"That's something we knew about when we signed the contract," she said of the 2005 deal.

Time to move on

Cricket

AFP, London

Marcus Trescothick wants to put the controversy of his early return from the tour of India behind him after marking his comeback to international cricket with a century on the first day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at Lord's on Thursday.

The left-handed opener's 106 was the centrepiece of England's total of 318 for three at stumps.

Having missed the 1-1 drawn

Test campaign in India for what the England management said at the time were "personal" and "family" reasons, Trescothick found himself the subject of unwelcome attention when he gave a television interview stating that a virus had forced him to come home.

"I'm delighted. It was time to move on and get things rolling again, get back into the England shirt," Trescothick, now in his 70th Test, said.

"I'm playing the same way I've played all my career. I love my cricket.



BITS AND BOBS

Germany last year.

Parreira, who will name his 23-man squad for the tournament on Monday, would not give any clues, although there are not expected to be any major surprises.

"Everybody knows which players will be picked and that's a good sign because it shows that we've done a good job over the years and that we've been coherent," he said.

He added that winning a sixth world title would not help Brazil solve day-to-day problems such as poverty, violence and unequal wealth distribution.

"The World Cup will not change Brazil at all," he said.

"Things such as education, health and violence will not change. What happens is that you have a state of euphoria where people are happy for a period of time, but structurally the country doesn't change."

Ribery likely to miss the cut

REUTERS, Paris

A large proportion of France's 80 million armchair national team coaches have already picked Franck Ribery in their World Cup squad.

It remains to be seen, however, whether Raymond Domenech will when he names his 23-man list on Sunday.

Arguably the finest player in Ligue 1 this season, the attacking midfielder from Olympique Marseille has featured on the front page of every single sports publication in the country over recent weeks.

Both a fighter and an artist, the 23-year-old Ribery is being hailed as the new Zinedine Zidane and any French soccer fan will tell you he has to go for Germany.

The problem is the under-21 international has so far always been overlooked by national coach Domenech, who does not like being told what he should do.

The 32-year-old has enjoyed a good season for Arsenal, who will face Barcelona in the Champions League final on Wednesday in Paris, but he has had a difficult relationship with Domenech since publicly criticising the coach's tactics.

A safer bet to join Zinedine Zidane, Claude Makelele, Patrick Vieira and company in France's midfield is Barcelona winger Ludovic Giuly, the perfect player to bring on when speed and creativity are needed to decide a game.

Thierry pulls for England

INTERNET, undated

Thierry Henry has thrown his weight behind England's attempt to win the World Cup for a second time.

The Arsenal striker on Thursday night became the first player to receive the Football Writers' Association Footballer of the Year Award for a third time. The 28-year-old will be trying to help France to victory at the finals in Germany this summer, but his wish is to see England - whose only triumph came in 1966 - prevail in the near future.

After collecting the award, Henry said: "I really hope that you can have another 1966. I see the passion you have here for your national team and how much you want them to win. You are a nation who loves sport and football and I hope you win the World Cup again because you deserve it."

He added: "In this country you live and breathe football and that is something that is missing sometimes."

"Some youngsters do not love the game any more. They love what is around the game, but not the game itself.

"But you always have to have respect for the game and the game will give you something back, as it has given me back something."